



# Arizona Registrar of Contractors

## Message from Israel G. Torres, Director

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June 2005

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### ROC partners with industry, community to lend a helping hand to Arizona's seniors

During the past two years, the ROC has launched several programs that have made a significant difference in the lives of many Arizonans. Along with our building trades and community partners, we recently wrapped up our first-ever Helping Hands for Seniors Program (HHSP), which focused on assisting senior homeowners and improving their quality of life. Thanks to the generosity of numerous volunteers, many of Arizona's seniors now enjoy safer home environments.

HHSP provided about 50 senior households with home modifications that make it easier and safer to carry out daily activities that many of us take for granted, including climbing stairs, bathing and cooking. Some examples include installing grab bars in bathrooms, constructing ramps for walkers and wheelchairs, and replacing kitchen and bathroom fixtures. The two highlights of these efforts were our HHSP community days in Phoenix and Tucson, which brought together numerous trades and talents to provide help to elderly homeowners who were in dire need of several major home repairs and safety-related remodeling projects.



HHSP recipients Oscar and Janet Ruiz stand in front of their home in Chandler Heights, which received a new coat of exterior paint thanks to HHSP volunteers.

HHSP volunteers gave generously of their time, resources and supplies and all share the ROC's commitment to improving the lives of Arizona seniors in need. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the members of the ROC Labor Advisory Council (LAC) and Consumer Advisory Network (CAN), as well as AARP Arizona, many seniors in our state now will be able to maintain their independence and live in more secure, comfortable environments.

I want to thank all HHSP volunteers who gave their precious time and expertise to this project. The community-minded spirit of the LAC, CAN and AARP made HHSP's inaugural year a success and we look forward to kicking off the next one at the end of this year. Thank you for helping build a legacy in Arizona that we can all be proud of!

Israel G. Torres, Director

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### Prevent contracting scams in your neighborhood: schedule a Neighborhood Ambassador presentation today!

Each year, thousands of Arizona homeowners are scammed out of millions of dollars for home repair and remodeling projects by unlicensed contractors. To protect homeowners and legitimate, licensed contractors in our state, the ROC offers an education and prevention seminar through the *Neighborhood Ambassador Program*

### Investigations Update

#### So-called "consultant" sought after report from Parker

6-24-05: A Parker homeowner contacted the ROC Tips Hotline regarding Gary Spackman, an unlicensed contractor and self-proclaimed consultant, who acted as a general contractor for the construction of an above-garage guesthouse. Spackman was paid \$30,000 for the project, which is valued at more than \$145,000. The poor workmanship of the structure has rendered it unsafe to live in and Spackman, like many scam artists, has left the area. The ROC will continue to pursue him in Arizona and California.



#### Tucson neighborhood sweeps net multiple violations

The ROC conducted its first intensive neighborhood sweeps operation in Tucson to crack down on unlicensed contracting activity and home construction scams, uncovering 42 violations of state contracting and municipal permit laws. Teams of ROC investigators and inspectors combed through neighborhoods, stopping at approximately 70 job sites to protect homeowners and verify that contractors working in the area were licensed properly. The sweeps covered all construction sites found between Pima Street and 29th Street from Alvernon Way to Wilmot Road.

#### Protect yourself against unlicensed contracting scams!

To report possible fraudulent home improvement activities or if you have been approached door-to-door by someone claiming to be a contractor, contact the ROC at 602-542-1525 or toll-free outside Maricopa County at 888-271-9286, or visit [www.azroc.gov](http://www.azroc.gov). Check the company's license status and report the company to the agency if you suspect a scam.

(NAP). Now is the time for neighborhood associations, Block Watch and other civic and service groups to schedule presentations for the remainder of 2005.

The ROC conducts the quarterly Neighborhood Ambassador Academy throughout the year. In addition, neighborhood leaders can request a NAP presentation for their association meetings at the time, date and location of their choice. These 30-minute, interactive workshops educate residents on how to avoid being victims of unlicensed contracting scams and the value of hiring licensed contractors for their home construction, remodeling and repair projects.

The NAP currently is scheduling speaking engagements for the rest of summer and the fall season, which is the peak time for seasonal scam artists who flock to Arizona to take advantage of our mild autumn and winter climates. To get the ROC on your neighborhood or civic group's calendar, call the Neighborhood Ambassador Program at 602-542-1525, ext. 7115, or toll-free statewide outside Maricopa County at 888-271-9286, ext. 7115.

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### Learn the ins and outs of new home ownership at the July 27 ROC New Homeowners' Seminar

Have you recently purchased a newly constructed home or are you in the market for one? If so, the ROC New Homeowners' Seminar will teach you what to look out for regarding the workmanship of your home, as well as how to work productively with your licensed contractor and how to use the ROC as a resource.



The ROC, along with its Consumer Advisory Network (CAN), developed the seminar to inform homeowners about where to turn and what to consider when they have questions about workmanship, the importance of using licensed contractors for new home enhancements, and how to spot new home repair scams. The first New Homeowners' Seminar, held in March, was a great success thanks to the participation of several CAN members and the 60-plus homeowners in attendance.

CAN was established by the ROC in 2004 to effectively inform, educate and assist Arizona consumers regarding home construction, repair and remodeling. This group, including representatives from business associations, consumer protection groups, state government and homeowners, focuses on initiatives the ROC can provide to educate consumers and eliminate unlicensed contracting scams. This collaborative effort is another extension of the ROC's mission, which is to promote quality construction by Arizona contractors and protect the health, safety and welfare of the public.

The next seminar will be held 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 27, in Phoenix. To register or for more details, call 602-542-1525, ext. 7405.

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### Handyman exemption remains intact as 2005 state legislative session concludes



During this year's session at the Arizona Legislature, the ROC focused on bills that support *licensed* contracting in Arizona. Fortunately, the assistance and testimony of many construction industry and consumer representatives boosted the ROC's efforts to curb the tide of unlicensed contracting and to enhance services for contractors and homeowners.

Most notable was the prevention of an attempt to increase a licensing exemption, which is a state law that requires an Arizona license for almost anyone contracting on a project that costs \$750 or more – which includes labor *and* materials - or requires a building permit. Two pieces of legislation sought to increase this amount to \$1,500 and eliminate materials from the equation. Had the bill succeeded, it would have opened the door for anyone to contract without a license, placing consumers at risk, while at

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the same time undercutting licensed, legitimate contractors, many of whom perform work in this price range.

Two other bills that impacted the ROC were approved in 2005:

**Senate Bill 1141:** This bill expands the Building Confidence Program, a service that allows homeowners and contractors to resolve disputes about construction informally with the assistance and expertise of a ROC inspector. This new law broadens this early dispute resolution program by allowing the inspector to consider an unlimited number of construction issues in one Building Confidence visit, and provides for full participation of all the parties involved.

**Senate Bill 1252:** This legislation strengthens the ROC's ability to criminally prosecute individuals who continue to contract on a license that has been revoked. It also requires the ROC to assess a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 for each violation for contracting while the license is suspended or inactive. Doing more to punish and discourage contracting on licenses that have been disciplined by the ROC helps both consumers and licensed contractors. Homeowners who hire contractors whose licenses are not in good standing are not eligible for the protections provided by the ROC, including reimbursement of damages from the Residential Contractors' Recovery Fund. For this reason, it is critical for homeowners and licensed contractors who hire subcontractors to check to ensure that a license is in good standing before signing a contract for a project.

The ROC already is preparing for the 2006 law-making season and will continue to develop and support legislation that benefits the licensed contracting industry and the consumers of Arizona.

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### National contractor licensing group set to develop national exam

The National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies (NASCLA) is developing a national contractor exam in cooperation with construction industry members across the country.



A national exam would provide license reciprocity across the United States, making licensed contractors more mobile in order to address the explosive demand for rapidly growing communities. Additionally, in areas of labor shortages, it aims to decrease the amount of unlicensed contracting which undercuts the legitimate, licensed contracting industry in Arizona and other states.

NASCLA is dedicated to ensuring that no critical skill is omitted from the list of knowledge and abilities needed to work safely and competently in various regions of the country. With this in mind, the exam's developers are seeking volunteers from the contracting industry who can share the knowledge and expertise to ensure a well-rounded, beneficial testing tool.

If you are an Arizona contractor with a license in good standing and are interested in volunteering for this project, contact the ROC at 602-542-1525, ext. 7115 by June 30.

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